ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

TALES DESIGNED TO CARRY AN...

IMPACT

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

2^50
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CANADA

NO. 2
MAY

MOTHER KNOWS BEST

THE GIRL IS NEAR THE BREAKING POINT; THAT MUCH YOU CAN SEE AT A GLANCE. HER EYES ARE AFRAID AND HER PLAIN FACE IS A PALE, TENSE MASK. BUT PSYCHIATRY IS A LOGICAL SCIENCE. TO SUCCEED, IT MUST BE COLD...DIRECT. AND YOU ARE A PSYCHIATRIST. SO YOU PERMIT YOURSELF NO SHOW OF EXPRESSION. YOU MAKE YOUR VOICE PROFESSIONAL...CLINICAL...

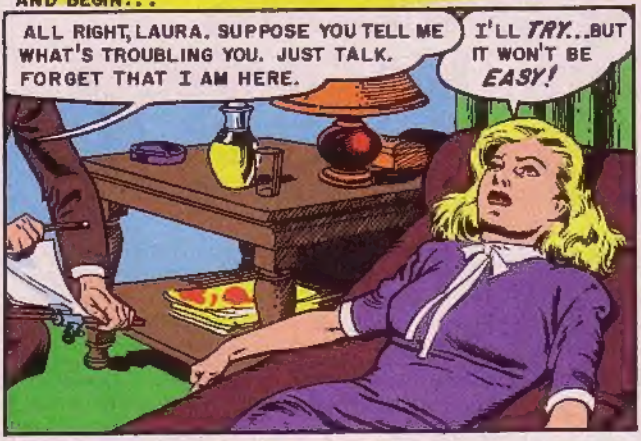
IT'S... IT'S SO HARD TO TELL YOU WHY I'M HERE! IT... IT TOOK ALL OF MY COURAGE TO COME! BUT, NOW... PLEASE... YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME!
I'LL TRY! BUT IF I AM TO SUCCEED, YOU MUST TELL ME EVERYTHING! THIS INTERVIEW WILL HAVE TO BE ON A COMPLETELY IMPERSONAL BASIS!
R. CRANDALL

YOU MAKE NOTES ON YOUR CLIP-BOARD SHEET. EXTREME TENSION...DEFINITE SIGNS OF MENTAL STRAIN...POSSIBLE NEUROSIS. YOU DON'T WANT TO SEEM CRUEL, BUT YOUR COLDNESS IS NECESSARY IF YOU ARE TO DO YOUR JOB...

I...I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO BECOME SO EMOTIONAL. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN!
GOOD! THEN WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER. NOW, I'LL NEED SOME INFORMATION ABOUT YOU... FOR MY RECORDS...

NAME: LAURA HART. AGE: 22. UNMARRIED. FATHER DECEASED. YOU FILL OUT THE FILE CARD AND YOU KNOW JUST WHAT THE GIRL IS THINKING...THAT YOU'VE GOT A HEART LIKE ICE. WELL, THAT CAN'T BE HELPED. YOU RISE SLOWLY...

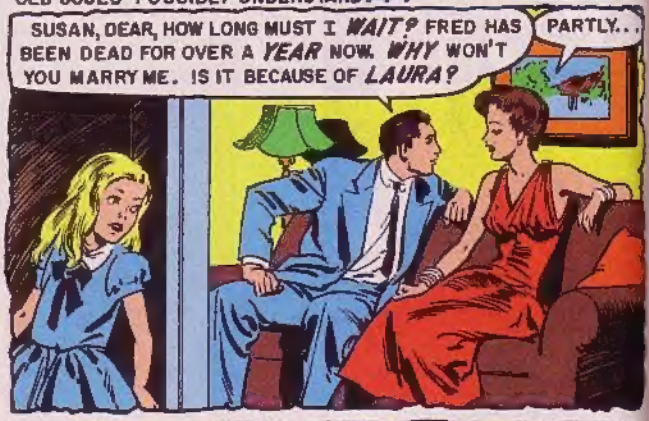
YOU LEAD THE WAY TO YOUR DIMLY LIT CONSULTING ROOM. YOU'RE TIRED. IT'S BEEN A LONG HARD DAY. BUT YOU WANT TO HELP THIS PATIENT. SO YOU SHAKE OFF YOUR FATIGUE... AND BEGIN...



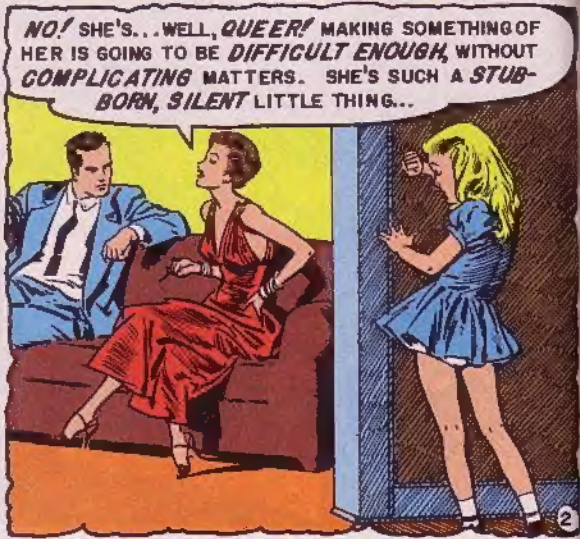
I... I DON'T QUITE KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED. IT... IT'S MY MOTHER. IF ONLY SHE'D TRIED TO UNDERSTAND. IF ONLY SHE HADN'T BEEN SO SELFISH.
NOW...NOW! NO NAME-CALLING! BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING...

IT SEEMS THAT YOU RESENT YOUR MOTHER. WHY? WHEN DID YOU FIRST BEGIN TO RESENT HER! DO YOU REMEMBER?
I... I THINK SO. IT WAS WHEN I WAS SIX. THAT WAS A YEAR AFTER MY FATHER DIED...

IT'S SO OBVIOUS TO YOU. YOU SEE IT ALMOST AT ONCE. THE GIRL'S VOICE SINKS TO A WHISPER. YOU SEE THE PICTURE SHE DRAWS FOR YOU OF HER CHILDHOOD MEMORIES. YOU SEE AN IMMATURE MIND BEING SCARRED BY SOMETHING NO SIX-YEAR-OLD COULD POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND...



DARLING, LAURA'S SUCH A STRANGE, SECRETIVE CHILD! SHE'S NOT LIKE OTHER CHILDREN! I KNOW! SHE WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND MY MARRYING AGAIN...
WHY NOT? COULDN'T YOU EXPLAIN?

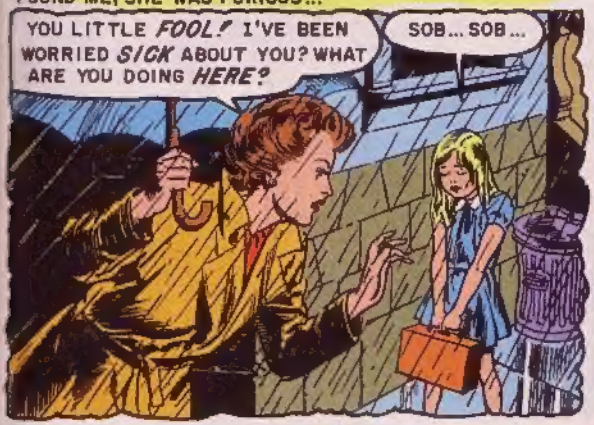

NO! SHE'S...WELL, QUEER! MAKING SOMETHING OF HER IS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT ENOUGH, WITHOUT COMPLICATING MATTERS. SHE'S SUCH A STUBBORN, SILENT LITTLE THING...

A FEW WORDS, BURNED INTO A CHILD'S BRAIN. JUST A FEW WORDS. AND YOU BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND. YOU CAN SEE WHY, LATER THAT EVENING, THE CHILD HAD GATHERED A FEW TREASURED POSSESSIONS...

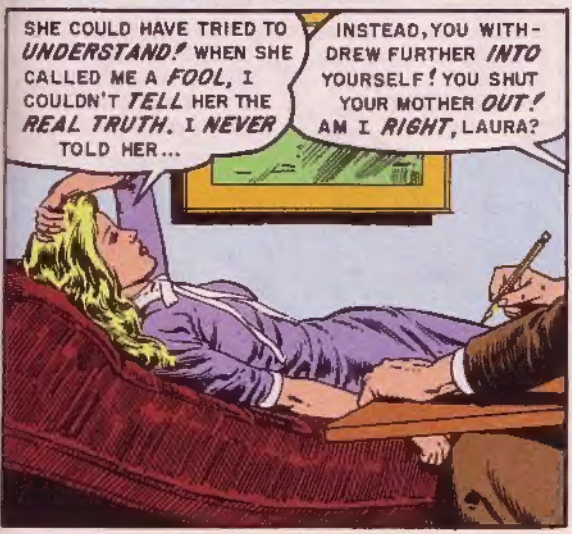
YOU SIGH. THESE CASES ARE ALWAYS SO SIMILAR. ALWAYS, THEY ARE BASED ON A MISUNDERSTOOD ACTION... A FEW INNOCENT, MISINTERPRETED WORDS...

SO YOU RAN AWAY... BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT YOUR MOTHER DESPISED YOU. BUT WEREN'T YOU JUST BEING COWARDLY, LAURA... REFUSING TO FACE THINGS?
NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! I WAS ONLY SIX...

"I LOVED MY MOTHER. I WANTED TO BE LIKE HER. THAT NIGHT, EVERYTHING MIGHT HAVE BEEN ALL RIGHT IF ONLY I COULD HAVE TALKED TO HER. BUT WHEN SHE FOUND ME, SHE WAS FURIOUS..."



I'D ONLY GONE A LITTLE WAY. I WAS TERRIFIED OF THE THUNDER. I WANTED HER TO HOLD ME... TO COMFORT ME. BUT SHE DIDN'T!
COULDN'T THAT HAVE BEEN BECAUSE SHE WAS HUMAN, TOO, LAURA? HOW COULD SHE HAVE KNOWN WHY YOU WERE OUT IN THE STORM? SHE WAS NO MIND-READER!


SHE COULD HAVE TRIED TO UNDERSTAND! WHEN SHE CALLED ME A FOOL, I COULDN'T TELL HER THE REAL TRUTH. I NEVER TOLD HER...
INSTEAD, YOU WITHDREW FURTHER INTO YOURSELF! YOU SHUT YOUR MOTHER OUT! AM I RIGHT, LAURA?

"NO! I... I ALWAYS WANTED MY MOTHER'S LOVE. BUT FROM THEN ON, SHE BECAME LIKE A STRANGER. SHE TOOK CARE OF ME, YES, BUT CASUALLY..."

MOTHER, BEFORE YOU GO OUT, I... I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU MY NEW DRESS...
IT'S LOVELY, DEAR! A TRIFLE GAUDY, BUT LOVELY! SHOW IT TO ME TOMORROW, LAURA, WILL YOU? I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO RUN!

I NEVER WORE THAT DRESS, BECAUSE SHE MADE IT SEEM CHEAP AND TAWDRY! SHE WANTED TO HURT ME!
DID SHE, LAURA? ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THAT SHE REALIZED YOU RESENTED HER FOR SOME REASON AND SO SHE TRIED TO GIVE YOU THE BENEFIT OF HER GUIDANCE... CASUALLY?
SHE WAS YOUR MOTHER! SHE MUST HAVE LOVED YOU!
SHE WAS NEVER A MOTHER TO ME. SHE NEVER TRIED TO BE. SHE NEVER EVEN KNEW THAT I TRIED TO LEAVE HOME AGAIN...
"...THAT VERY NIGHT!"
"I TRIED... BUT THOSE LEERING EYES FOLLOWED ME. IN THE END, I DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO GO THROUGH WITH IT. I WENT BACK HOME..."
SOB...SOB...
"I WAS A COWARD. SHE MADE ME A COWARD. AFTER THAT, I LIVED IN HER SHADOW. SHE GLITTERED. SHE WAS THE BUTTERFLY. AND I WAS THE MOTH..."
"IT WAS AFTER ONE OF MOTHER'S GAY PARTIES THAT I MADE UP MY MIND. SHE SAID SHE GAVE THE PARTIES FOR MY SAKE. BUT THAT WASN'T SO! I WOULDN'T BE DEPENDENT ON HER ANY LONGER. I WOULDN'T..."
A...A JOB, LAURA? YOU? REALLY! I FIND YOUR AMBITION ADMIRABLE, BUT WOULDN'T IT BE BEST TO CONTINUE YOUR SCHOOLING?
SURELY YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN WORKING IN SOME OFFICE. YOU'RE AN INTELLIGENT GIRL, AND...
AND WHAT, MOTHER? PRETTY? BUBBLING OVER WITH PERSONALITY? WE BOTH KNOW THAT, DON'T WE?
4

I'M *NOT* CLEVER! I'M *NOT* PRETTY! I'M JUST...*QUEER! PECULIAR! YOU'RE* THE *PRETTY* ONE! *YOU'RE* THE *CLEVER* ONE!

LAURA! I'LL *FORGIVE* THAT CHILDISH OUTBURST! BUT WE'LL HAVE *NO MORE OF IT!* THAT WILL *DO!* WE'LL DISCUSS THE MATTER *LATER*... WHEN YOU'RE *CALM!*

BUT THE MATTER WAS NEVER DISCUSSED. AS A PSYCHIATRIST, YOU KNOW WHY. PEOPLE...ALL PEOPLE.. SHY AWAY FROM THE UNPLEASANT...

IT'S A PITY THAT YOUR MOTHER NEVER *DID* TRY TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THAT OUTBURST. SHE *KNEW* THAT YOU WERE JEALOUS OF HER, OF COURSE...

I *WASN'T* JEALOUS! I JUST WANTED TO BE...*LOVED!*

MOTHER LOOKED UPON ME AS A *PROBLEM*. SHE *TRIED* TO UNDERSTAND ME AFTER I GREW UP, I KNOW! BUT SHE NEVER *REALLY* UNDERSTOOD! I WANTED HER *LOVE*... AND ALL SHE EVER GAVE ME WAS *HEARTACHE*...

"THERE WAS *WALT*. I MET HIM IN THE OFFICE WHERE I FOUND WORK. HE WASN'T MUCH. A CLERK. BUT HE...HE MADE ME FEEL LIKE A *WOMAN*. HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE *HAPPY*."

"WITH WALT, I CAME ALIVE. IN MY EYES, HE WAS EVERYTHING A GIRL COULD WANT. I TRIED TO BE PRETTY FOR HIM..."

LAURA! WHAT ON EARTH HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR *HAIR!?*

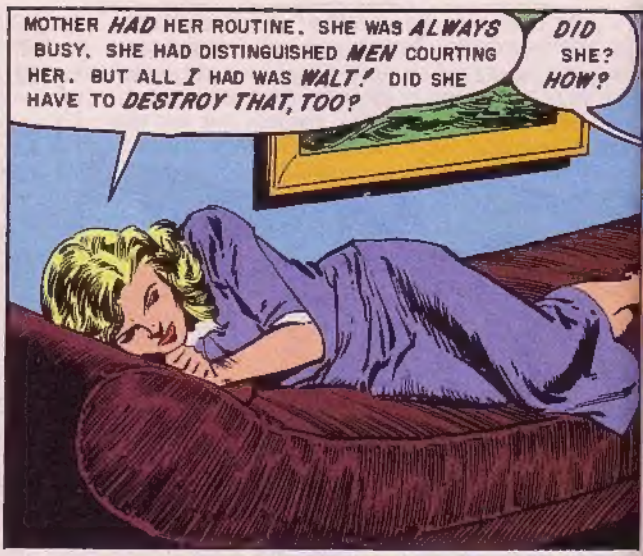
I...I HAD IT *CUT!* WALT...WALT THOUGHT I'D LOOK *BETTER* WITH IT SHORT!

WALT!? YOUR *LOVELY HAIR*... YOUR *BEST FEATURE*... AND NOW YOU'VE *RUINED IT!* OH, HOW COULD YOU HAVE *MADE* SUCH A MISTAKE?!

SHE *COULD* HAVE UNDERSTOOD! EVEN IF SHE *WERE* RIGHT, IT WOULDN'T HAVE *HARMED* HER TO *PRETEND* THAT CUTTING MY HAIR HAD MADE ME PRETTY!

NO! I...I *SUPPOSE* NOT! YET I'M SURE SHE *MEANT* NO HARM!

THESE INCIDENTS WERE JUST INCIDENTS TO HER, LAURA. IT WAS ONLY IN YOUR OWN MIND THAT THEY ASSUMED SUCH IMPORTANCE!
THEY WERE IMPORTANT... TO ME! DON'T YOU SEE? THOSE TIMES, WHEN I NEEDED LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING, SHE FAILED ME!

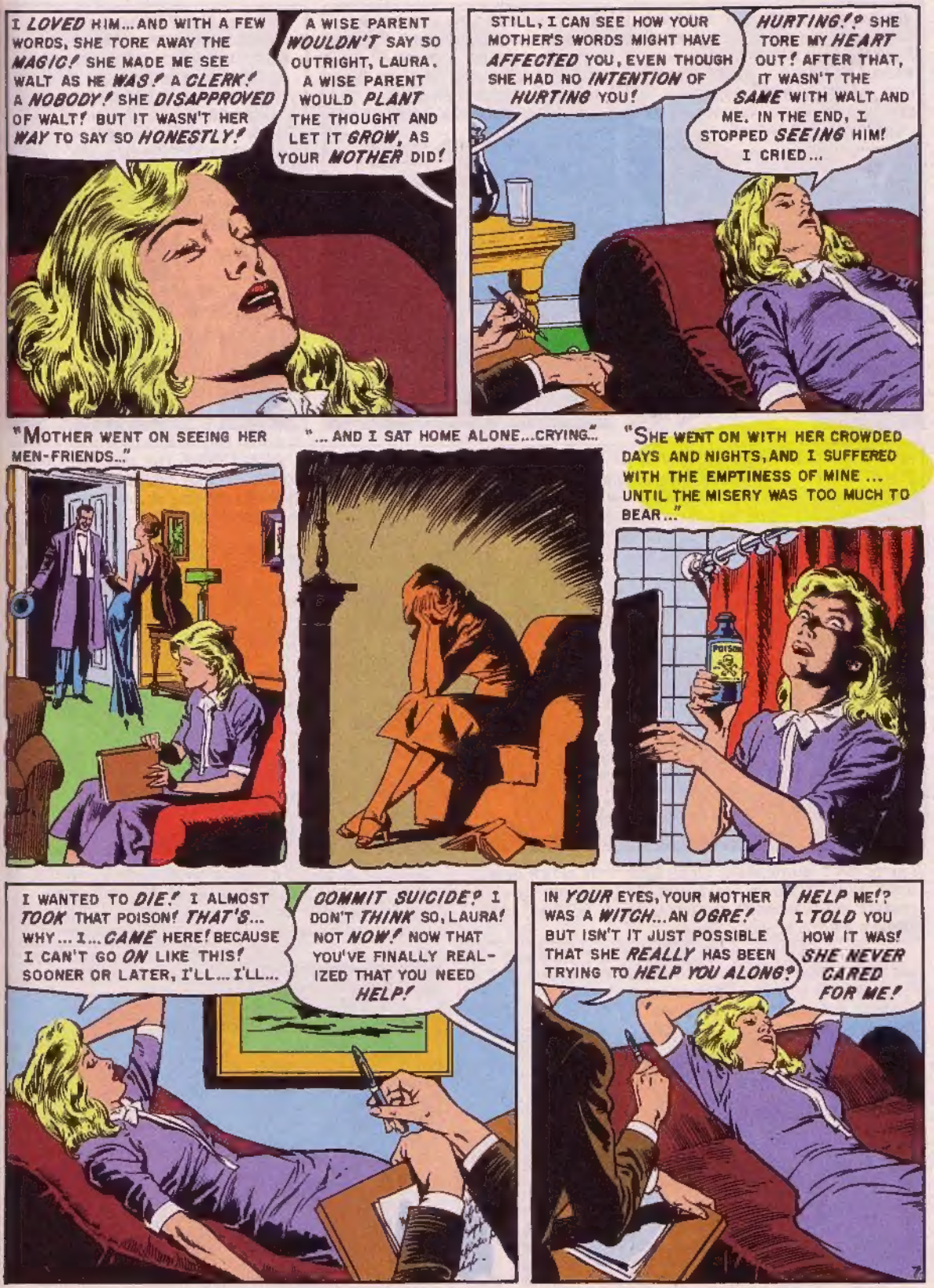

MOTHER HAD HER ROUTINE. SHE WAS ALWAYS BUSY. SHE HAD DISTINGUISHED MEN COURTING HER. BUT ALL I HAD WAS WALT! DID SHE HAVE TO DESTROY THAT, TOO?
DID SHE? HOW?

"BY BEING WHAT SHE WAS! WALT WANTED TO MARRY ME. I BROUGHT HIM HOME... TO DINNER... TO MEET MOTHER..."

"MOTHER WAS CANDY SWEET...THE PERFECT HOSTESS. I EVEN THOUGHT SHE LIKED WALTER...THAT SHE APPROVED OF HIM. BUT I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER..."

"I WAS ALMOST HAPPY...FOR A WHILE! FOR SUCH A LITTLE WHILE..."

YOU DID LIKE HIM, DIDN'T YOU, MOTHER? HE...HE WANTS TO MARRY ME!
LIKE HIM? HE'S A NICE BOY, LAURA. YOU CAN DO MUCH BETTER, OF COURSE! BUT, HE'S NICE...


I LOVED HIM...AND WITH A FEW WORDS, SHE TORE AWAY THE MAGIC! SHE MADE ME SEE WALT AS HE WAS! A CLERK! A NOBODY! SHE DISAPPROVED OF WALT! BUT IT WASN'T HER WAY TO SAY SO HONESTLY!
A WISE PARENT WOULDN'T SAY SO OUTRIGHT, LAURA. A WISE PARENT WOULD PLANT THE THOUGHT AND LET IT GROW, AS YOUR MOTHER DID!
STILL, I CAN SEE HOW YOUR MOTHER'S WORDS MIGHT HAVE AFFECTED YOU, EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD NO INTENTION OF HURTING YOU!
HURTING!? SHE TORE MY HEART OUT! AFTER THAT, IT WASN'T THE SAME WITH WALT AND ME. IN THE END, I STOPPED SEEING HIM! I CRIED...
"MOTHER WENT ON SEEING HER MEN-FRIENDS..."
"... AND I SAT HOME ALONE...CRYING..."
"SHE WENT ON WITH HER CROWDED DAYS AND NIGHTS, AND I SUFFERED WITH THE EMPTINESS OF MINE ... UNTIL THE MISERY WAS TOO MUCH TO BEAR..."
POISON
I WANTED TO DIE! I ALMOST TOOK THAT POISON! THAT'S... WHY... I... CAME HERE! BECAUSE I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! SOONER OR LATER, I'LL... I'LL...
COMMIT SUICIDE!? I DON'T THINK SO, LAURA! NOT NOW! NOW THAT YOU'VE FINALLY REALIZED THAT YOU NEED HELP!
IN YOUR EYES, YOUR MOTHER WAS A WITCH... AN OGRE! BUT ISN'T IT JUST POSSIBLE THAT SHE REALLY HAS BEEN TRYING TO HELP YOU ALONG?
HELP ME!? I TOLD YOU HOW IT WAS! SHE NEVER CARED FOR ME!

YOU'RE WRONG, LAURA! STOP AND REMEMBER! EVEN WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, SHE KNEW THAT YOU WERE... QUEER... NEUROTIC! SHE MADE MISTAKES, YES... BUT SHE HANDLED YOU THE BEST WAY SHE KNEW HOW!

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU IS FAIRLY COMMON. YOU OVERHEARD A FEW WORDS AND BUILT A WHOLE DISTORTED LIFE AROUND THEM! DID YOU EVER SHOW ANY LOVE FOR YOUR MOTHER?

NO! YOU WANTED LOVE... YOU DEMANDED LOVE... AND AT THE SAME TIME KEPT YOUR MOTHER AT ARM'S LENGTH. HOW ELSE COULD SHE HAVE TREATED YOU? HOW ELSE COULD SHE HAVE GIVEN YOU THE GUIDANCE YOU NEEDED, EXCEPT CASUALLY!

YOU'RE SAYING... I'M AT FAULT!
PARTLY! BOTH OF YOU MADE MISTAKES! BUT AT LEAST YOUR MOTHER TRIED! SHE KNEW YOU NEEDED HELP! YOU WERE DEATHLY AFRAID OF LIFE... BUT SHE COULDN'T TELL YOU!

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED! THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD LEARN THE TRUTH WAS BY SEEKING HELP AS YOU HAVE! BY COMING HERE, YOU'VE OVERCOME THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO YOUR HAPPINESS!

THERE ISN'T MUCH MORE TO BE SAID. THE INTERVIEW IS OVER. YOU STAND UP. BUT NOW, AT LAST, YOU CAN FORGET FOR A MOMENT THAT YOU ARE A DOCTOR, AND BEHAVE LIKE A WOMAN...
YOUR MOTHER LOVES YOU, LAURA! SHE ALWAYS HAS! ALL THAT REMAINS IS FOR YOU TO LET DOWN THAT WALL YOU'VE BUILT AROUND YOURSELF... AND LET HER IN! WILL YOU DO THAT?

THE WORDS SOUND STRANGE ON YOUR LIPS. YOU'VE BEEN COLDLY LOGICAL FOR SO LONG. IT'S BEEN HEARTBREAKING AT TIMES. BUT NOW, AS LAURA COMES INTO YOUR ARMS, YOU KNOW IT'S BEEN WORTH WHILE...
OH, YES, MOTHER... SOB... YES!

DIVORCE

I'M LOST, AND I'M SCARED, AND EVERYTHING IS SO BIG ALL AROUND ME...BIG PEOPLE AND BIG CARS AND BIG BUILDINGS AND BIG NOISES. IT FEELS LIKE THEY'RE ALL SWALLOWING ME UP. I'M HERE, RUNNING LIKE THIS, BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED...BECAUSE NOBODY CARES IF I DIE OR ANYTHING. WELL, I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO ME NOW, EITHER! I DON'T CARE! I DON'T CARE!
THAT TRUCK! LOOK OUT, KID! LOOK OUT!
OH, LORD! HE...HE'LL BE KILLED!
7532W
JACK DAVIS

I USED TO THINK MOM AND DAD LOVED ME. I EVEN THOUGHT IT WAS SWELL WHEN MOM TOOK ME DOWN TO MIAMI, TO A BIG HOTEL WITH PALM TREES ALL AROUND. BUT WE WERE THERE FOR A LONG TIME AND I MISSED DADDY AND I WANTED TO GO HOME...
MOM, YOU SAID DADDY WOULD BE HERE! WHEN IS HE COMING, MOM? WHEN?
YOUR FATHER IS HERE NOW, DEAR... IN MIAMI...
WELL, WHY DOESN'T HE COME SEE US? ARE WE GOING TO MEET HIM AT THE TRAIN, MOM? IS HE...
STOP ASKING SO MANY QUESTIONS, JACKIE! YOU'LL SEE...

THAT DAY . THAT DAY I FOUND OUT, WE RODE IN A TAXI FROM THE HOTEL TO A HIGH BUILDING AND WE WENT UPSTAIRS TO A BIG ROOM WITH BENCHES AND THERE WAS A MAN IN A BLACK ROBE SITTING BEHIND A HIGH COUNTER IN THE FRONT OF THE ROOM...

IS *THIS* WHERE DADDY IS, MOM?

SHHH! YOU'VE GOT TO BE *QUIET*, JACKIE!

I LOOKED AROUND AT ALL THE PEOPLE SITTING THERE, AND THEN I SAW DADDY. HE WAS SITTING AT A DESK. I RAN TO HIM AND HE PATTED MY HEAD AND SMILED. BUT THE MAN SITTING NEXT TO HIM DIDN'T SMILE...

I KEPT WAITING FOR YOU TO *COME*, DADDY, BUT YOU *DIDN'T* AND I WANTED TO GO *HOME*. CAN I *SIT* WITH YOU?

I...I *GUESS* IT'D BE ALL RIGHT, JACKIE!

MOM CAME AND TOOK ME BY THE ARM AND SHE DIDN'T LOOK AT DADDY. SHE TOOK ME TO ANOTHER DESK WHERE A MAN WAS SITTING WITH A LEATHER SCHOOL BAG. HE BEGAN TAKING SOME PAPERS OUT OF IT WHEN A MAN UP FRONT HOLLERED...

RUTH RICHARDSON VERSUS HARRY RICHARDSON. ARE BOTH PARTIES PRESENT?

MOM AND DAD AND THE TWO MEN WHO DIDN'T SMILE WENT TO THE FRONT OF THE ROOM...TO THE MAN IN BLACK AT THE HIGH COUNTER... AND THEY TALKED TO HIM...

MRS. RICHARDSON, YOU GIVE "CRUELTY" AS GROUNDS FOR THIS SUIT FOR DIVORCE...

I'VE STOOD HIS ABUSE FOR ELEVEN YEARS, YOUR HONOR! I JUST CAN'T TAKE ANY *MORE* OF IT!

YOUR HONOR, A MAN CAN PUT UP WITH JUST SO MUCH *NAGGING!*

MOM AND DAD BEGAN YELLING SO I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND THEM. THEN THE MAN IN FRONT HIT ON HIS COUNTER WITH A WOODEN HAMMER AND EVERYBODY TALKED SOFT...

YES, YOUR HONOR! A *BOY!* JACKIE HE'S *TEN*...

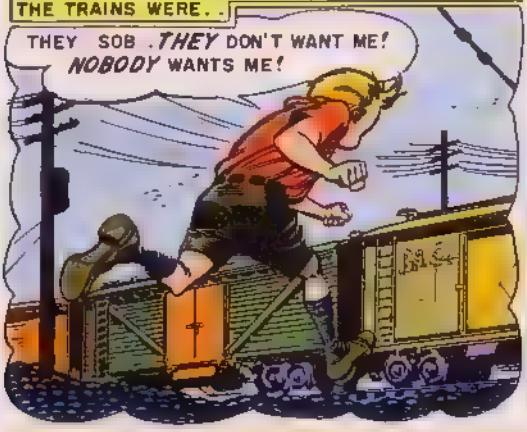
WHERE THERE'S A *CHILD* INVOLVED, I TRY TO EFFECT A *RECONCILIATION*. WE'LL *DISCUSS* THIS CASE IN MY *CHAMBERS*...

THE MAN IN THE BLACK ROBE HIT HIS WOODEN HAMMER AGAIN AND SAID SOMETHING. A LOT OF PEOPLE WENT OUT OF THE BIG ROOM. MOM CAME AND TOOK ME INTO A SMALL ROOM WITH LOTS OF BOOKS ON SHELVES. DAD AND THE TWO MEN WHO DIDN'T SMILE AND THE ONE IN BLACK SAT AT A DESK. MOM AND I SAT THERE TOO...

NOW, MR. AND MRS. RICHARDSON...

HAVE EITHER OF YOU TWO CONSIDERED THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTION...HOW IT MIGHT AFFECT THE BOY?
I'VE SACRIFICED MYSELF FOR TEN YEARS. I'VE GOT TO THINK OF MY OWN HAPPINESS, TOO!
AND YOU, MR. RICHARDSON? WOULDN'T YOU BE WILLING TO MEET YOUR WIFE HALF WAY...FOR YOUR SON'S SAKE?
I'VE TRIED, YOUR HONOR! IT'S NO USE. I CAN'T GO ON LIVING WITH HER!
THE MAN IN BLACK DIDN'T LOOK HAPPY. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY, THEN HE LOOKED AT ME AND SMILED KINDLY...
JACKIE, DO YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER... ABOUT THEIR WANTING A DIVORCE?
N-NO, SIR!
HE LOOKED AT MOM AND DAD BUT THEY JUST LOOKED DOWN AT HIS DESK. HE LOOKED AT ME AGAIN...
IT MEANS THEY DON'T LOVE EACH OTHER ANY MORE...THAT THEY'D BE HAPPIER APART. THEY WANT ME TO SAY THAT IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR THEM NOT TO BE MARRIED ANY MORE!
GOSH! LOTS OF TIMES THEY FIGHT...WITH WORDS, I MEAN... NOT HITTING! SOMETIMES THEN THEY'RE MAD AT ME, BUT LATER WE'RE ALL FRIENDS AGAIN. I DON'T...
ALL OF A SUDDEN I KNEW WHAT HE MEANT AND IT MADE ME CRY...
YOU MEAN THEY'LL GO AWAY FROM EACH OTHER AND I'LL NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN?
WELL, NO, JACKIE! IT WON'T BE QUITE THAT BAD. TELL ME, SON...WHOM WOULD YOU RATHER STAY WITH...YOUR MOTHER...OR YOUR FATHER?
NO! I LOVE THEM BOTH! I WANT THEM BOTH! DON'T LET THEM, MISTER! DON'T...
YOU HEARD THE BOY, MR AND MRS. RICHARDSON! DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU FEEL DIFFERENTLY? AREN'T YOUR PETTY SQUABBLES PIGAYUNE IN RATIO WITH THE NEEDS AND DESIRES OF YOUR SON?
MOM AND DAD DIDN'T ANSWER. THEY DIDN'T LOOK UP OR SAY ANYTHING. I KNEW THEN THEY DIDN'T CARE . THEY DIDN'T LOVE ME. I FELT ALL HURT INSIDE AND ANGRY AND I CRIED MORE .
I...I GUESS THAT'S THAT! ER... JACKIE, WILL YOU PLEASE WAIT OUTSIDE FOR A FEW MINUTES?
SOB... SOB...

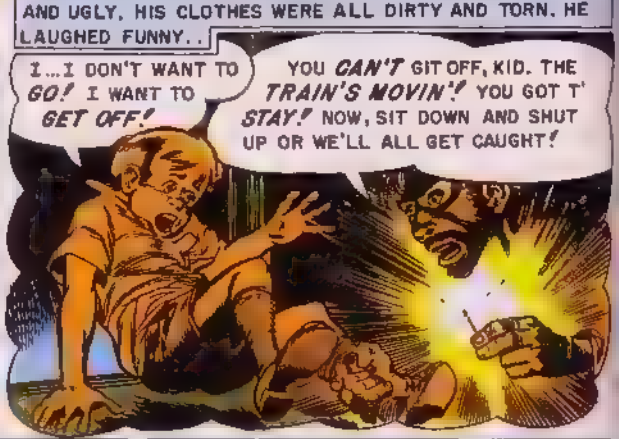
I WENT OUTSIDE INTO THE BIG ROOM. IT WAS EMPTY THEN I WENT OUT OF THE BUILDING. I WAS STILL CRYING AND PEOPLE LOOKED AT ME. I BEGAN TO RUN. I RAN AND RAN UNTIL I CAME TO WHERE THE TRAINS WERE..



THERE WAS AN ORANGE AND SILVER DIESEL ENGINE LIKE THE ONE I HAVE AT HOME. THERE WAS A BIG BLACK LOCOMOTIVE WITH FREIGHT CARS BEHIND IT. ONE OF THE FREIGHT CARS WAS EMPTY. THE DOOR WAS HIGH BUT I PULLED MYSELF UP AND CLIMBED IN...

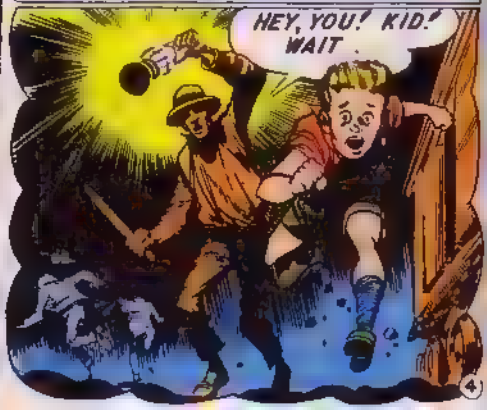
I WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THE FREIGHT TRAIN TO GO. I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP. NEXT THING I KNEW, THERE WAS A LOUD BUMP AND I HEARD THE CHUG CHUG CHUG OF THE LOCOMOTIVE. MY CAR WAS MOVING. I GOT SCARED.

I STARTED TO RUN TO THE DOOR, BUT SOMEBODY GRABBED MY LEG. I FELL DOWN. THEN A MATCH FLARED UP AND I SAW HIM. I SAW HIS FACE. IT NEEDED A SHAVE AND HE WAS MISSING TEETH AND THE ONES HE HAD WERE BROWN AND UGLY. HIS CLOTHES WERE ALL DIRTY AND TORN. HE LAUGHED FUNNY..

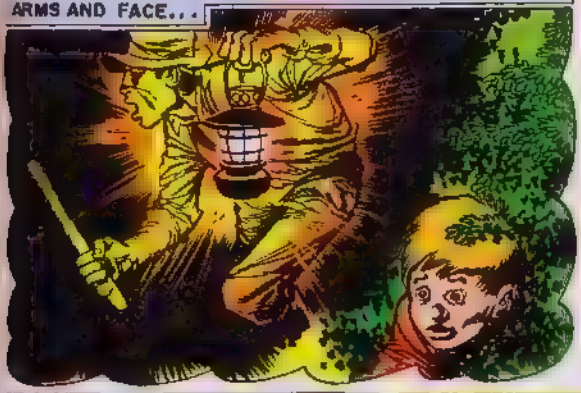

I...I DON'T WANT TO GO! I WANT TO GET OFF!
YOU CAN'T GIT OFF, KID. THE TRAIN'S MOVIN'! YOU GOT T' STAY! NOW, SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP OR WE'LL ALL GET CAUGHT!

I LOOKED AROUND. THERE WERE OTHER MEN IN THE FREIGHT CAR. THE FIRST ONE PUSHED ME DOWN. I WAS AFRAID, SO I STAYED DOWN. IT WAS HOT AND SMELLY. I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP AGAIN. SUDDENLY THE TRAIN WASN'T MOVING AND THE LIGHT COMING IN THE OPEN DOOR HURT MY EYES..

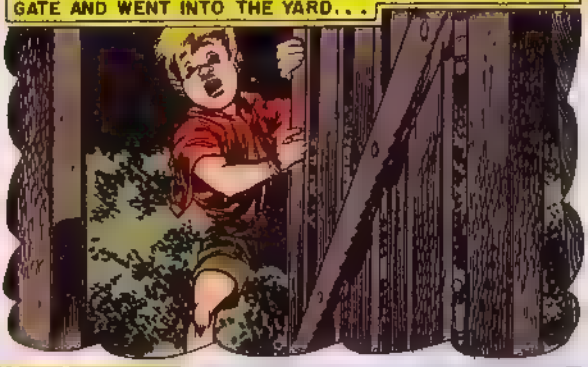
THE MAN WHO'D PUSHED ME DOWN STARTED OUT OF THE CAR AND THE MAN WITH THE BRIGHT LIGHT HIT HIM WITH A STICK. THE OTHERS PILED OUT AFTER HIM AND I JUMPED LAST. THE MAN WITH THE STICK TURNED...



I RAN, AND THE MAN WITH THE STICK CHASED ME. I RAN TO WHERE THERE WERE BIG THICK BUSHES, AND I HID IN THEM. THE MAN WITH THE STICK WALKED RIGHT BY ME SO I HELD MY BREATH, EVEN THOUGH THE THORNS AND BURRS WERE STICKING ME IN MY LEGS AND ARMS AND FACE...



FINALLY HE SHRUGGED AND WENT BACK TO THE TRAIN AND SIGNALED WITH HIS LIGHT AND THE TRAIN BEGAN TO MOVE. WHEN IT WAS GONE, I CRAWLED OUT FROM THE BUSHES AND STARTED WALKING. I WALKED ALONG A DUSTY DIRT ROAD FOR A LONG TIME. I WAS AWFUL THIRSTY AND HUNGRY. WHEN I SAW A HOUSE, I OPENED THE GATE AND WENT INTO THE YARD...



A BIG VICIOUS-LOOKING DOG CAME FROM IN BACK, GROWLING AND SNARLING AND SHOWING HIS TEETH...

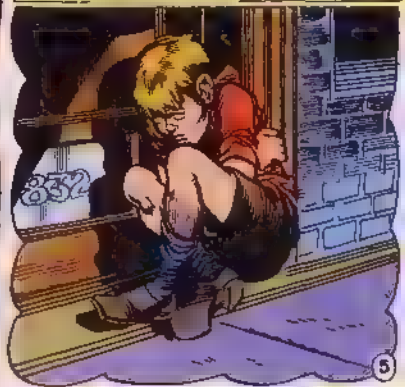
I RAN OUT. I WAS THUMPING ALL OVER. I FELT SCARED AND SICK AND I CRIED AGAIN...

I CRIED TILL MY THROAT HURT. I FOUND A LITTLE RIVER AND I DRANK WATER FROM IT...

I WALKED SOME MORE... FOR A LONG TIME. IT GOT DARK AND I GOT TIRED. I LAID DOWN BY A TREE IN A WOODS.

SOMETHING WOKE ME UP... A NOISE... LOTS OF NOISES... ALL AROUND... THERE WERE EYES LOOKING AT ME IN THE DARK. I GOT UP AND RAN...

I WAS AFRAID TO LAY DOWN ANY MORE. I WAS AFRAID EVEN WHEN I WAS WALKING, BUT I KEPT GOING TILL I WAS IN A CITY. IT WAS LATE AND EVERYTHING WAS LOCKED UP. I FOUND A STORE AND I SLEPT IN THE DOORWAY...



I WOKE UP 'CAUSE SOMEBODY WAS SHAKING ME. I SAW PEOPLE I DIDN'T KNOW LOOKING AT ME. IT WAS MORNING AND THE MAN WHO WAS SHAKING ME WAS A POLICEMAN AND I WAS SCARED...

HEY, THERE, YOUNG FELLER! NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' HERE? WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE I WAS AND I WAS SCARED AND I KNEW THE POLICEMAN WOULD PUT ME IN JAIL FOR RUNNING AWAY SO I JUMPED UP AND RAN. I RAN ACROSS THE STREET AND UP THE BLOCK. I'M RUNNING NOW AND HE'S CALLING AFTER ME. I SEE THE TRUCK...THE LOUD SCREECHING...THE BIG WHEELS...AND *I DON'T CARE*...

I'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR A LONG TIME, AND NOW I'VE WOKE UP. MY LEG HURTS AND MY ARM HURTS AND I HURT ALL OVER. THERE'S A PRETTY LADY IN A WHITE DRESS AND HAT STANDING OVER ME...

ARE... ARE YOU A *NURSE*?

WELL, IT LOOKS AS THOUGH WE'RE GOING TO BE *ALL RIGHT*, EH, SONNY? YOU MAY *TALK* TO HIM A LITTLE WHILE, BUT DON'T GET HIM *TOO EXCITED!*

I TURN MY HEAD TO SEE WHO SHE'S TALKING TO AND I SEE MOM AND DAD, TOGETHER, CRYING AND HOLDING EACH OTHER AND SMILING AT ME AT THE SAME TIME. THEN I CAN'T SEE THEM 'CAUSE MY EYES ARE FULL OF CRYING TOO...

JACKIE!...CHOKE... OH, MY BABY!

WE'RE *SORRY*, SON... SORRY FOR WHAT WE'VE *DONE* TO YOU!

HOW.. HOW DID YOU..?

WHEN WE CAME OUT AND YOU WERE GONE, WE STARTED LOOKING. WE COULDN'T FIND YOU. THEN WE WENT TO THE POLICE. THEY COULDN'T FIND YOU EITHER!

WE WERE NEARLY CRAZY WITH WORRY, DARLING. THEN WE HEARD THE RADIO... ABOUT SOME LITTLE BOY...HURT...IN JACKSONVILLE. WE KNEW IT WAS OUR...BOY...SOB... AND WE FLEW UP RIGHT AWAY...

YOUR MOMMY AND I HAVE DECIDED WE...WE MADE A *MISTAKE*, JACKIE... ABOUT THAT DIVORCE!

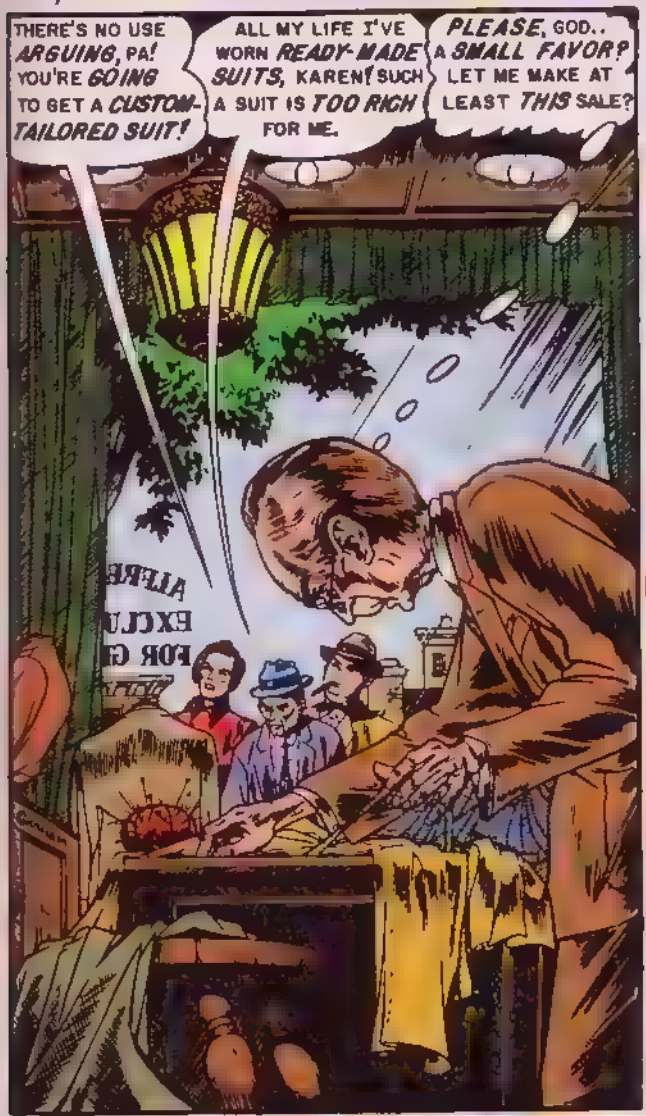
YOU...YOU WON'T GO *AWAY* FROM ME? WE'LL BE *TOGETHER... ALWAYS?...*

FOREVER, JACKIE... SOB... *FOR-EVER!*

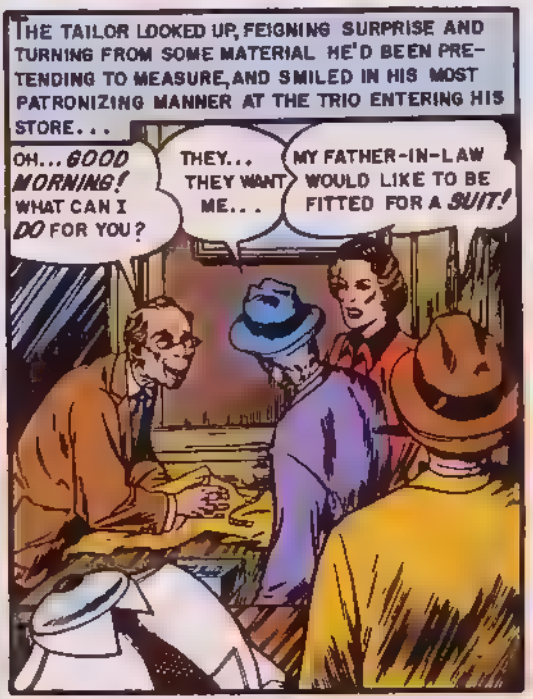
THE END

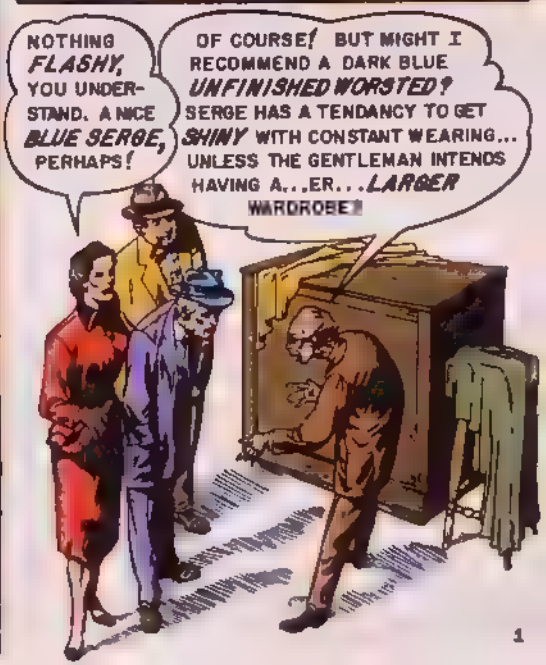
THE SUIT

IF YOU'D ASKED ALFRED DURLEY HOW BUSINESS WAS, HE'D HAVE SHRUGGED AND ANSWERED EVASIVELY THAT THINGS WEREN'T TOO BAD, CONSIDERING IT WAS THE SLOW SEASON. MORE ACCURATELY THOUGH, HE HAD NOT HAD A SINGLE ORDER FOR A MAN'S SUIT THAT MONTH. NEVERTHELESS, AS THE THREE PEOPLE... A COUPLE IN THEIR THIRTIES AND AN OLD MAN ABOUT SIXTY... STOPPED OUTSIDE HIS SHOP AND STUDIED HIS SIGN: "ALFRED DURLEY, EXCLUSIVE TAILOR FOR GENTLEMEN," HE PUTTERED ABOUT BUSILY. BUT QUIETLY, HE PRAYED...


THERE'S NO USE ARGUING, PA! YOU'RE GOING TO GET A CUSTOM-TAILORED SUIT!
ALL MY LIFE I'VE WORN READY-MADE SUITS, KAREN! SUCH A SUIT IS TOO RICH FOR ME.
PLEASE, GOD.. A SMALL FAVOR? LET ME MAKE AT LEAST THIS SALE?

THE TAILOR LOOKED UP, FEIGNING SURPRISE AND TURNING FROM SOME MATERIAL HE'D BEEN PRETENDING TO MEASURE, AND SMILED IN HIS MOST PATRONIZING MANNER AT THE TRIO ENTERING HIS STORE...




NOTHING FLASHY, YOU UNDERSTAND. A NICE BLUE SERGE, PERHAPS!
OF COURSE! BUT MIGHT I RECOMMEND A DARK BLUE UNFINISHED WORSTED? SERGE HAS A TENDANCY TO GET SHINY WITH CONSTANT WEARING... UNLESS THE GENTLEMAN INTENDS HAVING A...ER... LARGER WARDROBE?

JULIUS EDISON SQUIRMED UNCOMFORTABLY AS MR. DURLEY, THE CUSTOM TAILOR, SCRUTINIZED HIS SHABBY DEPARTMENT STORE SUIT. JULIUS SAW JUST A TRACE OF CONTEMPT IN THE TAILOR'S FACE...

ONE... *ONE* SUIT WILL BE *PLENTY!* AND I WOULDN'T BE GETTING *THAT* EXCEPT MY DAUGHTER KAREN AND HER HUSBAND RALPH, HERE, *INSIST!*

NOW, PA! ALL YOUR LIFE, YOU'VE *WORKED HARD.* YOU'VE *GOT* SOMETHING DECENT *COMING* TO YOU! MR. DURLEY. WHAT WILL A BLUE UNFINISHED WORSTED *COST?*

ALFRED DURLEY SMILED. HE TRIED NOT TO APPEAR TOO ANXIOUS...

I GATHER THAT THIS WILL BE THE GENTLEMAN'S *FIRST* CUSTOM-MADE SUIT. BECAUSE I WANT THIS TO BE A *HAPPY OCCASION,* I WILL MAKE A *SPECIAL PRICE.* ONE *HUNDRED AND TEN DOLLARS!*

ONE... COUGH... *ONE HUNDRED AND TEN DOLLARS!*

MR. DURLEY HAD TRIED TO MAKE THE PRICE SEEM LIKE A BARGAIN... A GIFT! JULIUS EDISON TURNED AND WOULD HAVE LEFT THE SHOP IN DISGUST HAD NOT HIS DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW STOPPED HIM...

DAD! WE CAN *AFFORD* IT! I *ASSURE* YOU!

JUST WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE THE *MATERIAL,* SIR! A CUSTOM-MADE SUIT OF *THIS* MATERIAL IS A *STEAL* AT THAT PRICE!

MR. DURLEY DREW A BOLT OF DARK BLUE CLOTH FROM A SHELF...

LOOK, SIR! THE *FINEST WORSTED AVAILABLE! IMPORTED...* FROM *ENGLAND!* WHY THE *MATERIAL ALONE* COST *ME* SIXTY-FIVE DOLLARS!

BUT A *HUNDRED AND TEN DOLLARS!* IT'S... IT'S SO *EXPENSIVE!*

SIR, THIS SUIT WILL LAST A *LIFETIME!* FORTY-FIVE DOLLARS FOR THE NEEDLE IS *CHEAP!* I WOULDN'T *DO* IT FOR SO LITTLE *ORDINARILY,* EXCEPT THAT I WANT YOU TO BE A *SATISFIED CUSTOMER!*

I'VE NEVER INDULGED IN LUXURIES *BEFORE!* I'M NOT GOING TO *START NOW!* A *READY-MADE* IS GOOD ENOUGH.

KAREN CURTIS LOOKED SEVERELY AT HER FATHER...

PA! RALPH AND I WILL BE *VERY HURT* IF YOU DON'T LET US DO THIS FOR YOU! I *MEAN* IT!

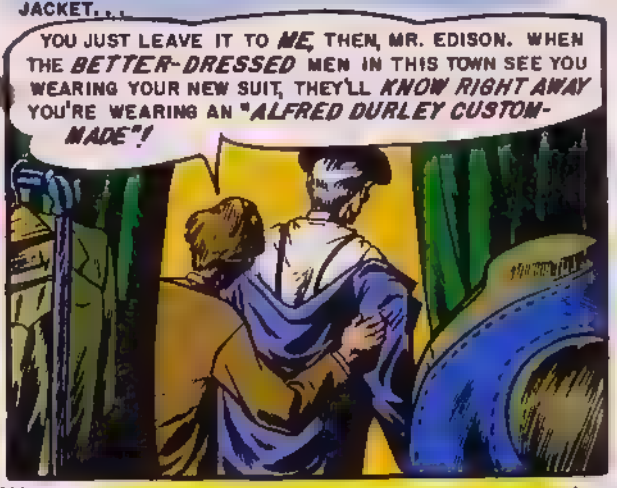
BUT, KAREN! SO MUCH *MONEY...*

MR. EDISON! WE *INSIST!*

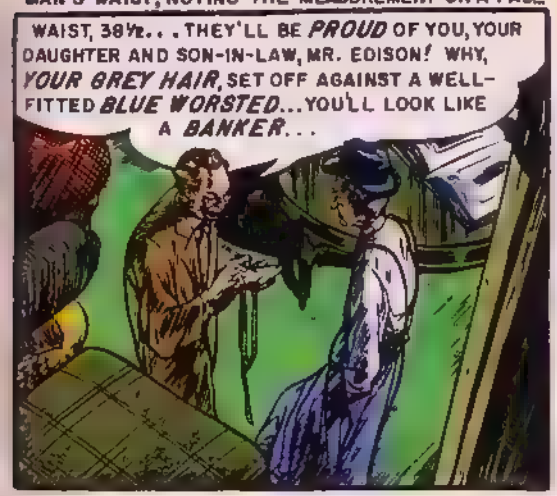
RALPH CURTIS NODDED TO THE TAILOR, WHO STEPPED QUICKLY INTO HIS BACK ROOM AND RETURNED WITH A BOOK OF PATTERNS...

I HAVE JUST THE THING FOR YOU, MR. EDISON. HERE, LOOK AT THIS! THE LATEST IN STYLING FROM LONDON'S BOND STREET! NOTICE THE CUT OF THE DRAPE... THE CONSERVATIVE LINES OF THE...
I CAN'T TELL A THING FROM A PICTURE, MISTER!

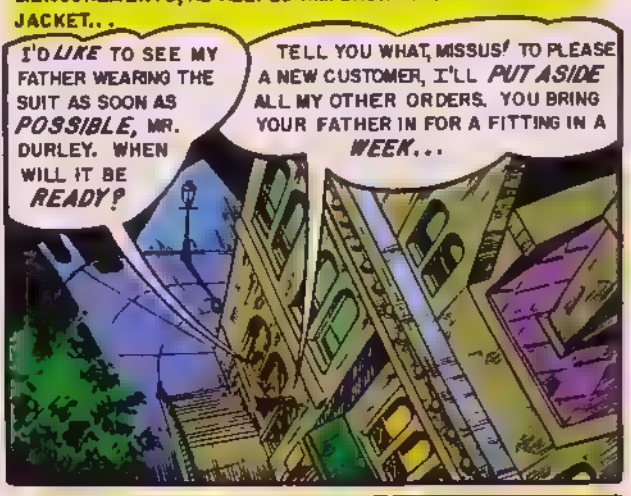
MR. DURLEY PULLED THE TAPE MEASURE FROM ABOUT HIS SHOULDERS AND HELPED JULIUS EDISON OUT OF HIS JACKET...


YOU JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, THEN, MR. EDISON. WHEN THE BETTER-DRESSED MEN IN THIS TOWN SEE YOU WEARING YOUR NEW SUIT, THEY'LL KNOW RIGHT AWAY YOU'RE WEARING AN "ALFRED DURLEY CUSTOM-MADE"!

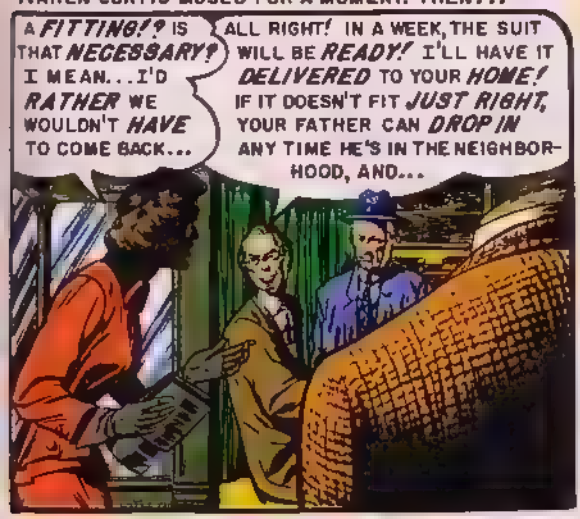
THE TAILOR WHIPPED HIS TAPE AROUND THE OLD MAN'S WAIST, NOTING THE MEASUREMENT ON A PAD...


WAIST, 38½... THEY'LL BE PROUD OF YOU, YOUR DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW, MR. EDISON! WHY, YOUR GREY HAIR, SET OFF AGAINST A WELL-FITTED BLUE WORSTED... YOU'LL LOOK LIKE A BANKER...

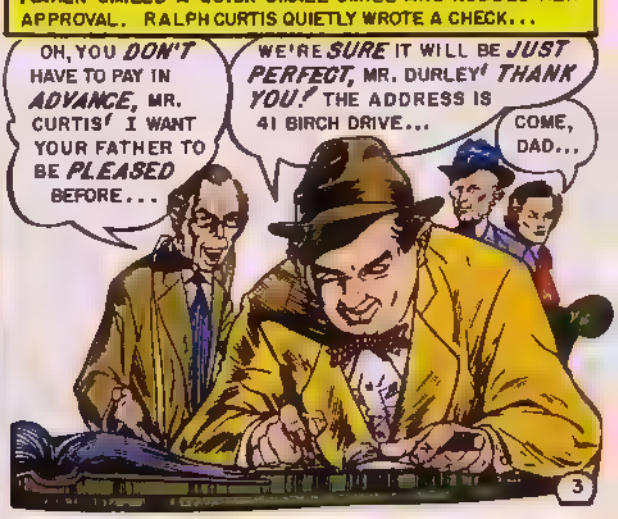
WHEN THE TAILOR HAD FINISHED TAKING THE OLD MAN'S MEASUREMENTS, HE HELPED HIM BACK INTO HIS OLD SUIT JACKET...


I'D LIKE TO SEE MY FATHER WEARING THE SUIT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, MR. DURLEY. WHEN WILL IT BE READY?
TELL YOU WHAT, MISSUS! TO PLEASE A NEW CUSTOMER, I'LL PUT ASIDE ALL MY OTHER ORDERS. YOU BRING YOUR FATHER IN FOR A FITTING IN A WEEK...

KAREN CURTIS MUSED FOR A MOMENT. THEN...


A FITTING!? IS THAT NECESSARY? I MEAN... I'D RATHER WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO COME BACK...
ALL RIGHT! IN A WEEK, THE SUIT WILL BE READY! I'LL HAVE IT DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME! IF IT DOESN'T FIT JUST RIGHT, YOUR FATHER CAN DROP IN ANY TIME HE'S IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AND...

KAREN SMILED A QUICK SMALL SMILE AND NODDED HER APPROVAL. RALPH CURTIS QUIETLY WROTE A CHECK...


OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY IN ADVANCE, MR. CURTIS! I WANT YOUR FATHER TO BE PLEASED BEFORE...
WE'RE SURE IT WILL BE JUST PERFECT, MR. DURLEY! THANK YOU! THE ADDRESS IS 41 BIRCH DRIVE...
COME, DAD...

KAREN LED HER FATHER OUT OF THE STORE. THE OLD MAN WAS ALL SMILES. RALPH TURNED TO THE TAILOR...

ER...ABOUT THAT SUIT, MR. DURLEY. MY WIFE AND I...

MR. CURTIS! YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW WILL DERIVE THE *GREATEST OF PLEASURE* OUT OF WEARING A *DURLEY-MADE SUIT*, I *ASSURE* YOU!

MR. DURLEY ASSUMED HIS MOST UNCTUOUS MANNER AS HE GUIDED RALPH TO THE DOOR...

YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW HAS THE *PHYSIQUE*... THE *DISTINGUISHED BEARING* TO DO AS MUCH FOR THE *SUIT* AS IT WILL DO FOR *HIM*, MR. CURTIS. IN YEARS TO COME, HE WILL *TREASURE* IT. YOU HAVE BEEN MOST *KIND* TO HIM! GOOD-DAY..

ALFRED DURLEY GENTLEMENS TAILOR

RALPH CURTIS SHRUGGED AND LEFT. MR. DURLEY SMILED HAPPILY AS HE WATCHED THE TRIO STROLL UP THE STREET...

WHEW! I REALLY HAD TO *SELL THEM!* A HUNDRED AND TEN DOLLARS! IF THEY'D HAVE *BARGAINED*, I'D HAVE DONE IT FOR *NINETY*...

AS MR. DURLEY SET ABOUT CUTTING THE MATERIAL FOR MR. EDISON'S SUIT, HE HAD A SUDDEN THOUGHT...

OLD MR. EDISON IS A MAN OF UTTERLY *PLEBEIAN TASTES*, IT IS OBVIOUS! BUT ONCE HE EXPERIENCES THE *VOLUPTUOUS PLEASURE* OF WEARING A *FINE GARMENT*, HE'LL *NEVER AGAIN* BUY ANOTHER READY-MADE. AND THE *IMPORTANT* THING IS, MR. EDISON HAS *FRIENDS*... OTHER MEN WHO WILL *ENVY* HIM AND WANT A "DURLEY CUSTOM-MADE" FOR *THEMSELVES!*

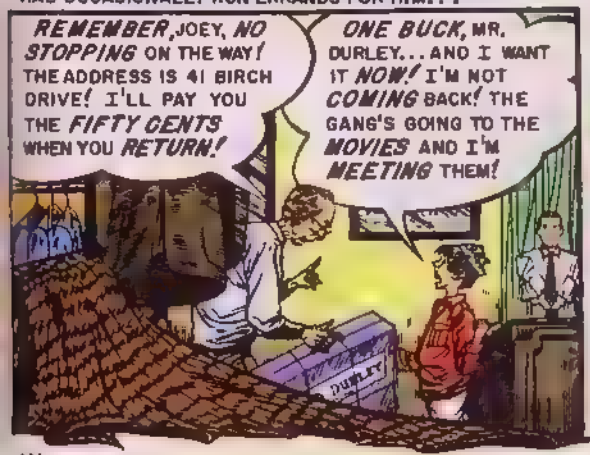
AND SO, MR. DURLEY TOOK SPECIAL PAINS WITH MR. EDISON'S SUIT...

THIS WILL BE MY *FINEST WORK OF ART!*

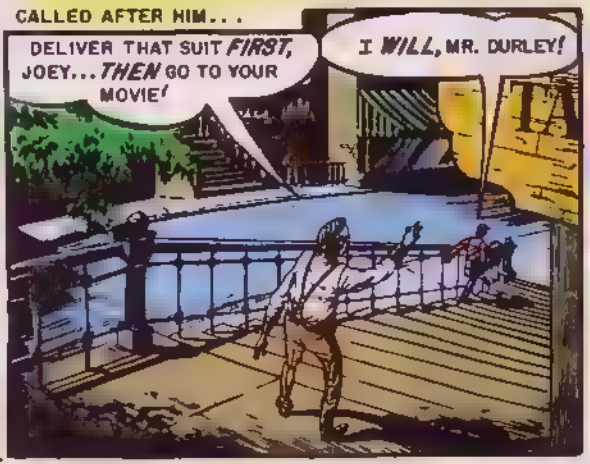
HE USED THE BEST SILK IN HIS SHOP FOR THE LINING...

MR. EDISON WILL BE MY *WALKING ADVERTISEMENT* AMONG A GROUP I HAVE *NEVER* BEEN ABLE TO *REACH!*

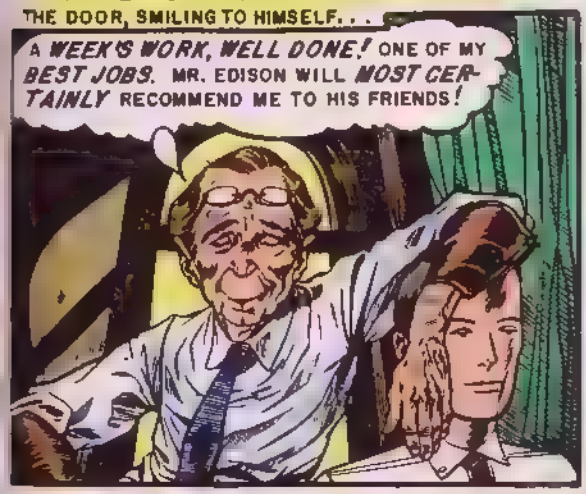
ONE WEEK LATER, THE SUIT WAS FINISHED. MR. DURLEY FOLDED IT TENDERLY INTO THE BOX BEARING HIS NAME AND CALLED IN A NEIGHBORHOOD BOY WHO HAD OCCASIONALLY RUN ERRANDS FOR HIM...


REMEMBER, JOEY, NO STOPPING ON THE WAY! THE ADDRESS IS 41 BIRCH DRIVE! I'LL PAY YOU THE FIFTY CENTS WHEN YOU RETURN!
ONE BUCK, MR. DURLEY... AND I WANT IT NOW! I'M NOT COMING BACK! THE GANG'S GOING TO THE MOVIES AND I'M MEETING THEM!
DURLEY

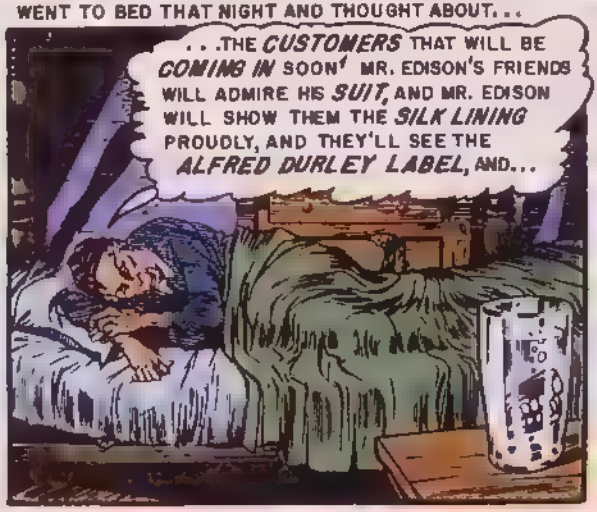
THE BOY STUFFED THE DOLLAR THAT MR. DURLEY RELUCTANTLY GAVE HIM INTO HIS POCKET AND TOOK THE BOX CONTAINING THE SUIT. THE OLD TAILOR ANXIOUSLY CALLED AFTER HIM...



WHEN THE BOY HAD DISAPPEARED UP THE BLOCK, MR. DURLEY WENT BACK INTO HIS STORE AND CLOSED THE DOOR, SMILING TO HIMSELF...

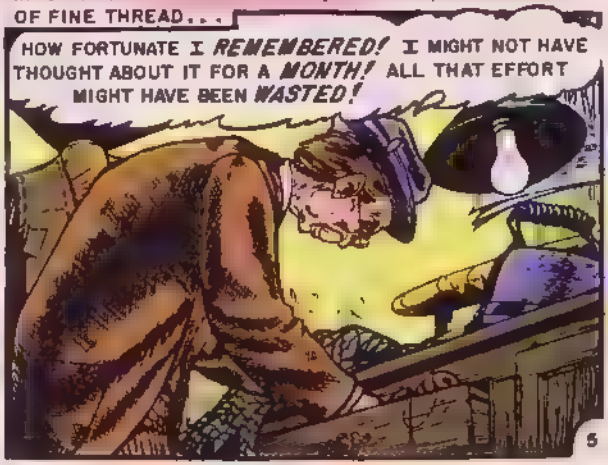


HE WAS STILL GLOWING WITH SATISFACTION WHEN HE WENT TO BED THAT NIGHT AND THOUGHT ABOUT...


...THE CUSTOMERS THAT WILL BE COMING IN SOON! MR. EDISON'S FRIENDS WILL ADMIRE HIS SUIT, AND MR. EDISON WILL SHOW THEM THE SILK LINING PROUDLY, AND THEY'LL SEE THE ALFRED DURLEY LABEL, AND...

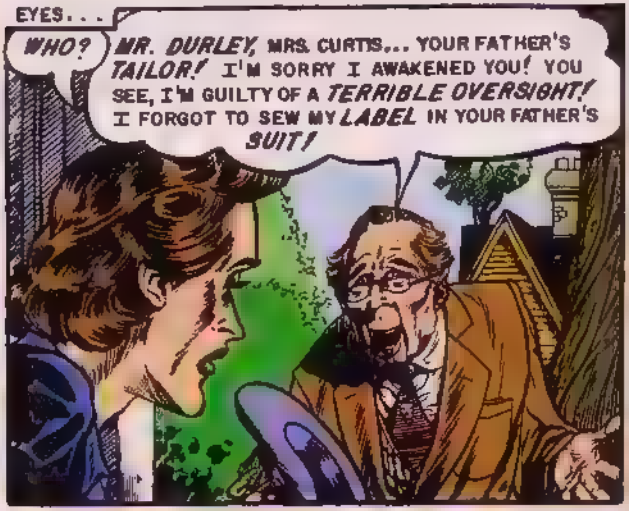
THE CUSTOM TAILOR SAT BOLT UPRIGHT IN BED...

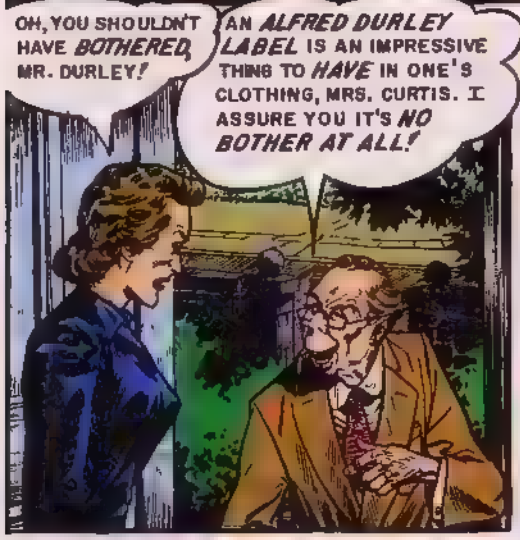
MR. DURLEY COULD HARDLY WAIT FOR MORNING. WHEN DAWN FINALLY CAME, HE DRESSED QUICKLY AND HURRIED INTO HIS SHOP TO GET A LABEL, A NEEDLE, AND A SPOOL OF FINE THREAD...



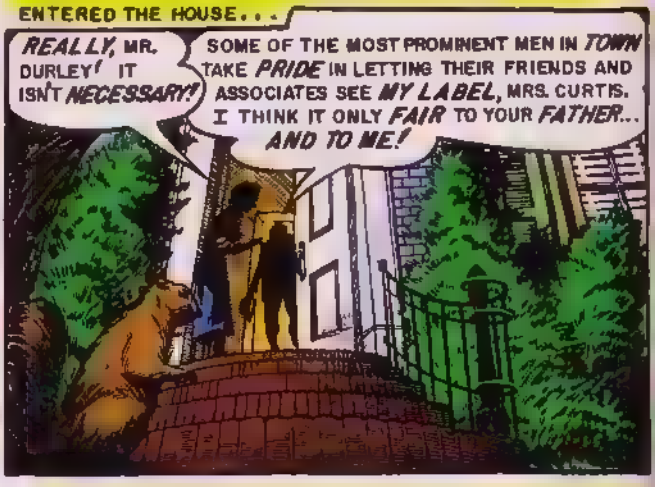
THE CUSTOM TAILOR SOON ARRIVED AT 41 BIRCH DRIVE. HE CLIMBED THE BRICK STEPS AND NERVOUSLY PRESSED THE BELL BUTTON...

KAREN CURTIS OPENED THE DOOR WITH HEAVY-LIDDED EYES...

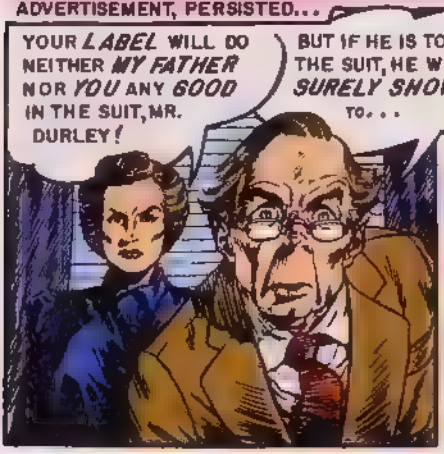

WHO?
MR. DURLEY, MRS. CURTIS... YOUR FATHER'S TAILOR! I'M SORRY I AWAKENED YOU! YOU SEE, I'M GUILTY OF A TERRIBLE OVERSIGHT! I FORGOT TO SEW MY LABEL IN YOUR FATHER'S SUIT!


OH, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED, MR. DURLEY!
AN ALFRED DURLEY LABEL IS AN IMPRESSIVE THING TO HAVE IN ONE'S CLOTHING, MRS. CURTIS. I ASSURE YOU IT'S NO BOTHER AT ALL!

MR. DURLEY WAS CONSIDERABLY TAKEN ABACK BY KAREN CURTIS'S INDIFFERENCE. HE PUSHED PAST HER AND HURRIEDLY ENTERED THE HOUSE...


REALLY, MR. DURLEY! IT ISN'T NECESSARY!
SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT MEN IN TOWN TAKE PRIDE IN LETTING THEIR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES SEE MY LABEL, MRS. CURTIS. I THINK IT ONLY FAIR TO YOUR FATHER... AND TO ME!

MR. DURLEY DETECTED A BIT OF AN EDGE ON KAREN CURTIS'S VOICE... A TINGE OF ANNOYANCE. BUT ALFRED DURLEY, WITH A GOOD EYE FOR SELF-ADVERTISEMENT, PERSISTED...


YOUR LABEL WILL DO NEITHER MY FATHER NOR YOU ANY GOOD IN THE SUIT, MR. DURLEY!
BUT IF HE IS TO WEAR THE SUIT, HE WILL SURELY SHOW IT TO...

CUSTOM TAILOR ALFRED DURLEY MOVED WITH ALMOST TRANCELIKE SLOWNESS INTO THE LIVING ROOM, HIS HEAD SHAKING IN DISBELIEF, BUT HE COULDN'T TAKE HIS EYES OFF THE BODY OF JULIUS EDISON, DRESSED FOR THE GRAVE IN A FINE BLUE UNFINISHED WORSTED SUIT...

THE STAR

I heard this from my friend, Joe Mackey, who is a newspaper reporter and always runs into these stories in his work. It seems this kid, Laurie Somers was her name, had been bitten by the show business bug, so she had saved her nickels and dimes and come on to New York. She had a little bundle—maybe five hundred bucks—and at first, it wasn't too bad. She could live a little and her courage was high and her hopes hadn't yet been dimmed.

But six or seven weeks later, when every booking agent, talent scout and producer had said "no," the kid was feeling down in the mouth. Besides there was a big dent in the bank roll and she was reaching the end of the line. By this time, she was living in a room no bigger than the proverbial broom closet. It was run by an old harpy who shoved roomers around like they were pins in a bowling alley. She had some pretty crummy rooms, and the one she had rented to Laurie was the worst of the lot. It didn't even have a window. The only air came from a sky light. So, every night, beat and discouraged, Laurie would come to this dismal hole and lie on the lumpy bed staring up through the sky light at the stars.

There was one star that seemed to shine brighter than all the others. Laurie decided that was her star and she used to talk to the twinkling orb. She even had a name for it. Danny Duncan, she called it, for no reason that made any sense except she liked the name Danny Duncan. Anyway, this one night, she came home and she knew it was the last stop. There was thirty-five cents in her coat pocket and that was it. Thirty-five cents wasn't money even in the days when you could buy a stein of beer for a nickel, or make a telephone call. So, Laurie came into the room. She folded her coat very neatly, undressed, and put on her pajamas. She brushed her long, reddish-brown hair until it was silky and shiny in the light of the feeble electric bulb that hung unshaded from the ceiling at the end of a dangling wire. Laurie looked at herself in the cracked mirror for a long time. Then, she went to the single burner stove, turned on the gas and lay quietly on the bed, staring up at Danny Duncan.

"Goodbye, Danny," she said softly as the sweet-sick smell of the gas filled the room. She breathed deeply and soon, her eyes closed, her head lolled to one side and her breathing became slower and slower.

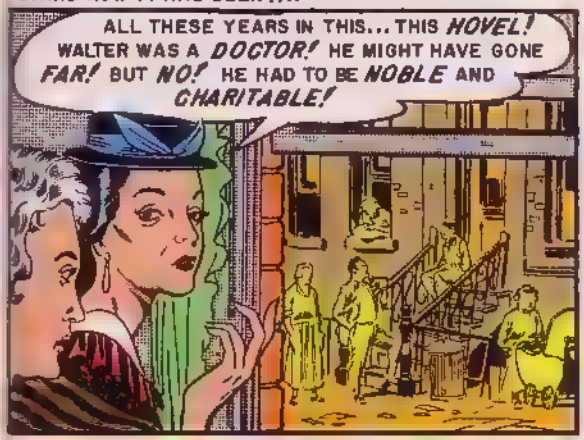
The old harpy landlady smelled the gas and sent for the cops. The policeman who broke down the door, carried Laurie to a room with a window and worked like a fool for fifteen minutes giving her artificial respiration, until the pulmotor squad came. They saved Laurie. The ambulance doc gave the cop the credit for the save. He said the cop's artificial respiration had been applied just in time, otherwise it would have been too late. So now, Joe told me, Laurie is getting married to the cop who saved her life. She's very happy. And the funniest part is that the cop's name is Danny Duncan.

PAID IN FULL

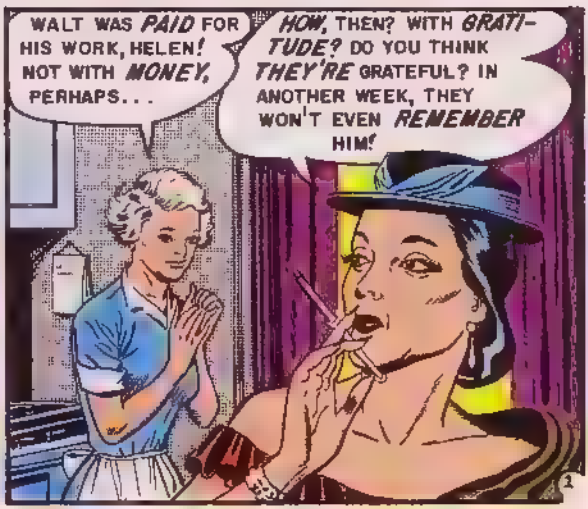
MARTHA WILSON TURNED SLOWLY AWAY FROM THE FADED PORTRAIT OF HER LATE HUSBAND IN ITS CHEAP FRAME. BEHIND MARTHA, HER SISTER'S VOICE DRONED ON, FILLING THE SHABBY TENEMENT ROOM WITH BITTER, LOGICAL WORDS. BUT THERE WAS NO BITTERNESS IN MARTHA'S TIRED, MIDDLE-AGED FACE. THERE WAS SORROW AND PRIDE AND MEMORIES, BUT NO BITTERNESS... NO REGRETS...

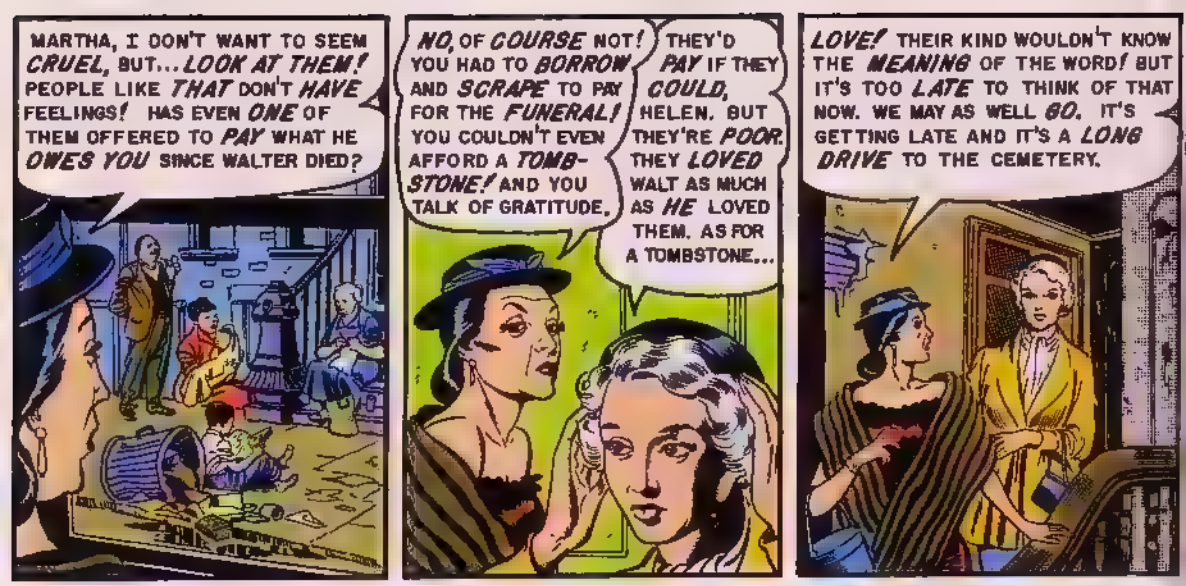
IF YOU'D ONLY *LISTENED* TO ME, MARTHA! I *WARNED* YOU! HEAVEN KNOWS, I *TOLD* YOU OFTEN ENOUGH NOT TO LET WALTER *WASTE HIS LIFE* ON THESE PEOPLE!

MARTHA SHOOK HER HEAD. HER SISTER HELEN JUST *DIDN'T UNDERSTAND!* SHE HAD HER BIG HOUSE, HER RICH, SUCCESSFUL HUSBAND. HOW COULD SHE UNDERSTAND HOW IT HAD BEEN?...

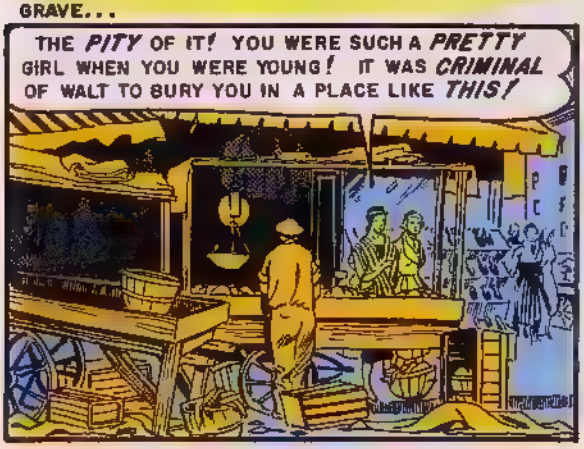


MARTHA SMILED AT HER SISTER SADLY...

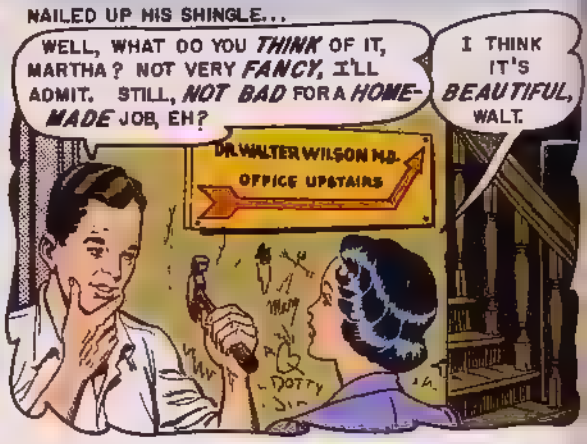

WALT WAS *PAID* FOR HIS WORK, HELEN! NOT WITH *MONEY,* PERHAPS...
HOW, THEN? WITH *GRATITUDE?* DO YOU THINK *THEY'RE* GRATEFUL? IN ANOTHER WEEK, THEY WON'T EVEN *REMEMBER* HIM!


MARTHA, I DON'T WANT TO SEEM CRUEL, BUT... LOOK AT THEM! PEOPLE LIKE THAT DON'T HAVE FEELINGS! HAS EVEN ONE OF THEM OFFERED TO PAY WHAT HE OWES YOU SINCE WALTER DIED?
NO, OF COURSE NOT! YOU HAD TO BORROW AND SCRAPE TO PAY FOR THE FUNERAL! YOU COULDN'T EVEN AFFORD A TOMB-STONE! AND YOU TALK OF GRATITUDE.
THEY'D PAY IF THEY COULD, HELEN. BUT THEY'RE POOR. THEY LOVED WALT AS MUCH AS HE LOVED THEM. AS FOR A TOMBSTONE...
LOVE! THEIR KIND WOULDN'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD! BUT IT'S TOO LATE TO THINK OF THAT NOW. WE MAY AS WELL GO. IT'S GETTING LATE AND IT'S A LONG DRIVE TO THE CEMETERY.

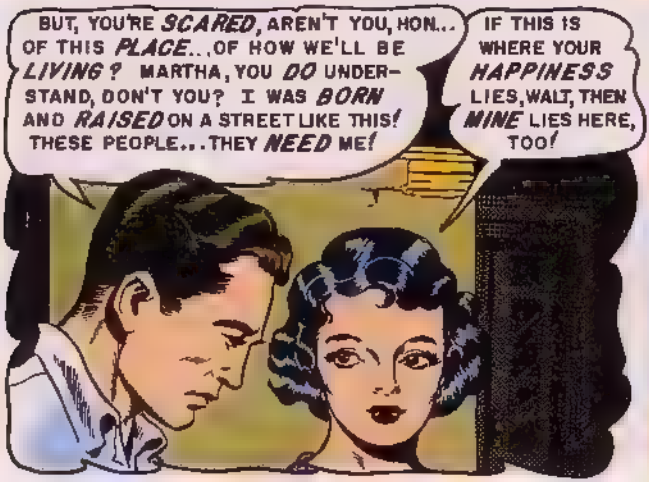
HELEN HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO ATTEND WALTER WILSON'S FUNERAL. SHE AND HER HUSBAND HAD BEEN AWAY. SO, NOW, SHE AND MARTHA WERE GOING OUT TO VISIT HIS GRAVE...



HAD IT REALLY BEEN SO LONG? MARTHA SHOOK HER HEAD. THESE STAIRS, THE SMELLS, THE SOUNDS... THEY WERE SO FAMILIAR TO HER NOW. YET IT SEEMED LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY THAT SHE AND WALT HAD STOOD THERE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND HE'D NAILED UP HIS SHINGLE...

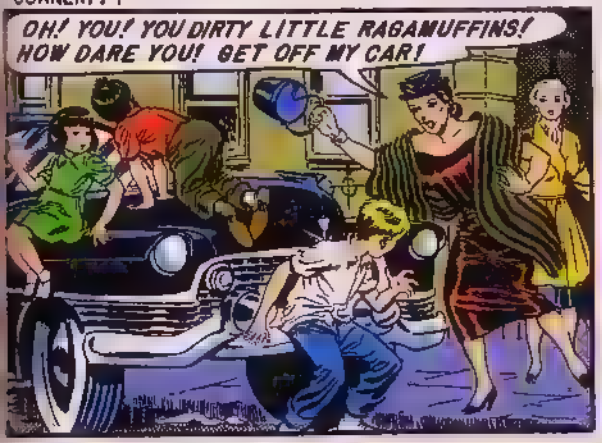

WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT, MARTHA? NOT VERY FANCY, I'LL ADMIT. STILL, NOT BAD FOR A HOME-MADE JOB, EH?
I THINK IT'S BEAUTIFUL, WALT.
DR. WALTER WILSON M.D.
OFFICE UPSTAIRS
DOTTY

...ONLY YESTERDAY THAT HE'D TURNED TO HER...


BUT, YOU'RE SCARED, AREN'T YOU, HON... OF THIS PLACE... OF HOW WE'LL BE LIVING? MARTHA, YOU DO UNDER-STAND, DON'T YOU? I WAS BORN AND RAISED ON A STREET LIKE THIS! THESE PEOPLE... THEY NEED ME!
IF THIS IS WHERE YOUR HAPPINESS LIES, WALT, THEN MINE LIES HERE, TOO!

THEY'D BEEN SO YOUNG. BUT THERE'D BEEN STRENGTH IN WALT... STRENGTH AND GOOD-NESS. THAT WAS WHY MARTHA HAD MARRIED HIM...

As Helen and Martha rounded the tenement street corner. . .

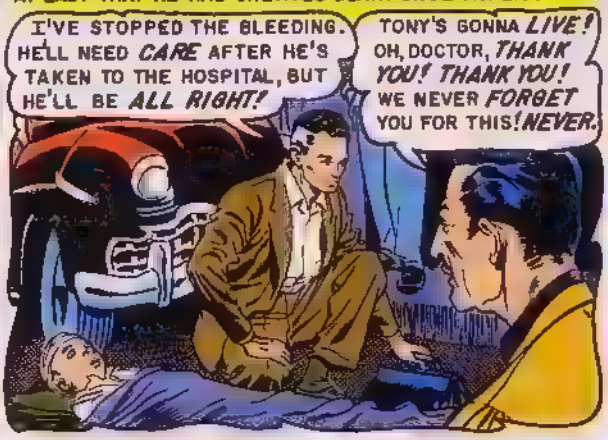


The children climbed from Helen's car and scattered in all directions. . .

LITTLE BRATS! THERE'S A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF TRASH WALT THREW AWAY HIS LIFE FOR. DESTROY! THAT'S ALL THEY KNOW!
YOU MUSN'T BE TOO HARD ON THEM, HELEN. THEY PLAY WHERE THEY CAN. THE STREETS ARE THE ONLY PLAY-GROUND THEY HAVE!

Martha tried to explain, but it was no use. Helen had never seen the things Martha had seen. The tortured eyes, the frantic faces, the small broken bodies. . .

Helen had never stood by while Walt worked. Helen had never heard his deep sigh when he knew at last that he had cheated death once more. . .


I'VE STOPPED THE BLEEDING. HE'LL NEED CARE AFTER HE'S TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL, BUT HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT!
TONY'S GONNA LIVE! OH, DOCTOR, THANK YOU! THANK YOU! WE NEVER FORGET YOU FOR THIS! NEVER.

YOU...YOU SAY HE'S GOTTA GO TO THE HOSPISTAL? DOCTOR, WE NO CAN PAY FOR A HOSPISTAL! WE NO CAN PAY YOU...EVEN...
NOW, DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT PAYING ME. AND DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT THE HOSPITAL, EITHER. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT... SOMEHOW!

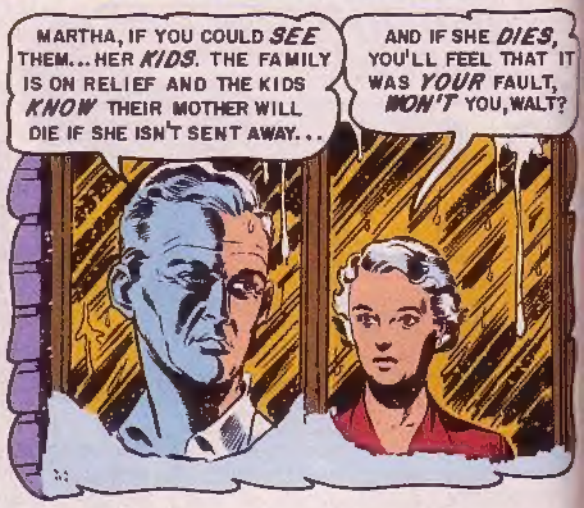
And Walt HAD taken care of it... somehow. Little Tony had had his care. Tony, and Juan and Bernie and Danny, and so many others. . . down through the years. . .

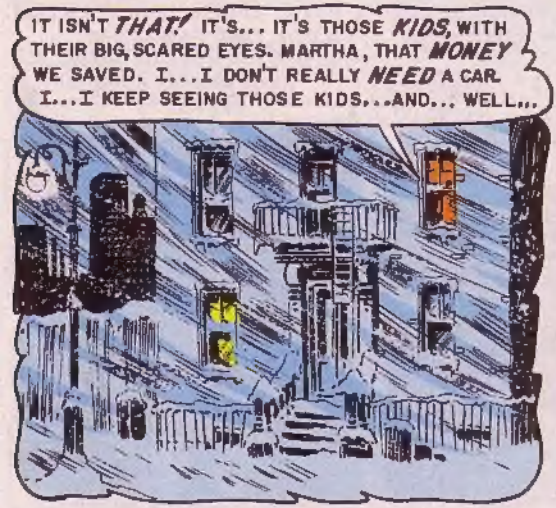
IT HASN'T BEEN EASY FOR YOU, HAS IT, HONEY... COOPED UP HERE NIGHT AFTER NIGHT... NEVER ENOUGH MONEY? MAYBE... MAYBE YOUR FAMILY WAS RIGHT! MAYBE YOU SHOULD HAVE MARRIED SOMEONE ELSE...

MAYBE...EXCEPT THAT I DIDN'T LOVE SOMEONE ELSE! I LOVED YOU! SO WE'LL HAVE NO MORE OF THAT KIND OF TALK, DOCTOR. COME ALONG! I'LL WALK YOU DOWNSTAIRS...
R WILSON MR
UPSTAIRS

JUST FOR A MOMENT, MARTHA SMILED AGAIN AS SHE REMEMBERED. THEN, HELEN'S VOICE SHATTERED THE SWEET MEMORY TO BITS...
THE LITTLE MONSTERS! I'VE ONLY HAD THIS CAR A MONTH! AND I HAD TO TAKE SUCH A HUGE LOSS ON MY OLD ONE WHEN I TRADED IT IN.
THEY DIDN'T DO ANY DAMAGE, HELEN. IT'S GETTING LATE. HADN'T WE BETTER GET STARTED?

WALT HAD NEVER BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD A CAR. THERE HAD BEEN A TIME WHEN HE AND MARTHA HAD ALMOST MANAGED IT. BUT THEY NEVER DID BUY THE CAR. MARTHA KNEW THEY WOULDN'T THAT NIGHT WALTER TOLD HER ABOUT MRS. BERRETTI...

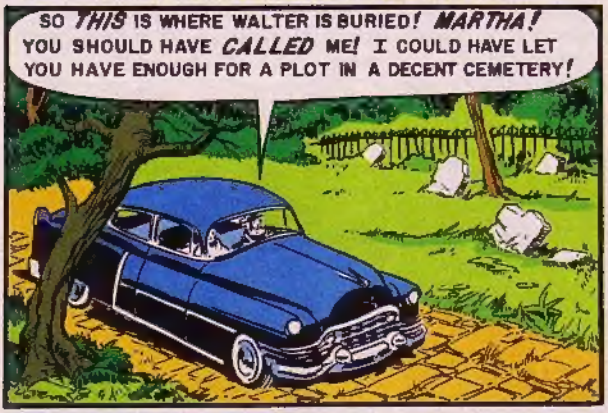

MARTHA, IF YOU COULD SEE THEM... HER KIDS. THE FAMILY IS ON RELIEF AND THE KIDS KNOW THEIR MOTHER WILL DIE IF SHE ISN'T SENT AWAY...
AND IF SHE DIES, YOU'LL FEEL THAT IT WAS YOUR FAULT, WON'T YOU, WALT?


IT ISN'T THAT! IT'S... IT'S THOSE KIDS, WITH THEIR BIG, SCARED EYES. MARTHA, THAT MONEY WE SAVED. I... I DON'T REALLY NEED A CAR. I... I KEEP SEEING THOSE KIDS... AND... WELL...

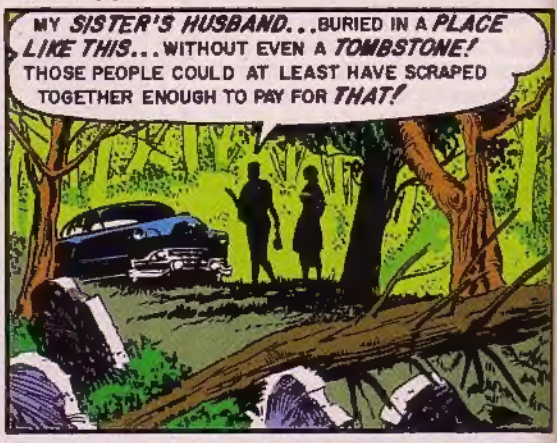
SO THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A CAR. MRS. BERRETTI HAD GONE TO ARIZONA FOR A YEAR, AND EACH WEEK FOR A YEAR, WALT HAD BROUGHT A BASKET OF FOOD TO THE BERRETTI CHILDREN...

HELEN'S CAR MOVED FROM THE LITTER-STREWN CURB . . .
HOW COULD WALT HAVE BEEN SO SELFISH? IT WOULDN'T BE SO BAD IF THESE PEOPLE CARED! BUT THEY'RE LIKE...LIKE CATTLE!
THEY CARED, HELEN! THEY NEVER SAID SO! THEY DIDN'T KNOW HOW! BUT THEY CARED!
DID THEY, REALLY? THEY KILLED HIM! BUT THAT WOULDN'T MATTER TO THEM! THEY AREN'T INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO BE GRATEFUL . . .
HELEN WAS WRONG! MARTHA KNEW THAT! BUT, AS THE SEDAN THREADED ITS WAY THROUGH THE CROWDED STREETS, SHE KEPT SILENT. IT WAS TRUE, THOUGH, ABOUT THEM KILLING WALT. THEY HAD, IN A WAY. . .
WALT! YOU'RE SOAKED TO THE SKIN!
I HAD TROUBLE FINDING A PHARMACY OPEN THIS TIME OF NIGHT . . .
THE HARRIS GIRL WAS RUNNING A HIGH FEVER AND I HAD NO MORE PENICILLIN IN MY BAG . . .
YOUR HANDS ARE LIKE ICE. YOU'LL PROBABLY HAVE A FEVER YOURSELF!
RINGGG
NONSENSE! HELLO! YES! WHO? OH, I SEE! ALL RIGHT, I'LL BE RIGHT OVER!
WALT! WAIT! YOU CAN'T GO OUT AGAIN! AT LEAST NOT UNTIL YOU GET INTO SOME DRY CLOTHES!
THERE ISN'T TIME! BABIES DON'T WAIT TO BE BORN WHILE DOCTORS CHANGE THEIR CLOTHES!
THAT NIGHT WALT HAD HELPED TO BRING ANOTHER TINY LIFE INTO THE WORLD. . . WITHOUT PAY. BUT THAT HAD BEEN HIS LAST VISIT TO A PATIENT. . .
I'M AFRAID IT'S PNEUMONIA, MRS. WILSON. IT LOOKS BAD. . . VERY BAD. . .
THERE HADN'T EVEN BEEN ENOUGH TO BURY WALT, AFTERWARDS. MARTHA HAD HAD TO BORROW EVEN TO PAY FOR THE CHEAP, PLAIN, PINE COFFIN . .
SOB...SOB...
5

No one had spoken to Martha at the funeral. What was there to say? She'd buried Walt, and then she'd wept. Until today. . .until Helen came. . .


So *this* is where Walter is buried! *Martha!* You should have *called* me! I could have let you have enough for a plot in a decent cemetery!

The car hummed to a stop. Helen and Martha got out. . .


My *sister's husband*. . .buried in a *place like this*. . .without even a *tombstone!* Those people could at least have scraped together enough to pay for *that!*

The two women trudged along an overgrown walk past rows of gravestones. . .

But *no!* Not *them!* Not even a *tombstone!* It's *shameful!* That's what it is. . .just *shameful!*
Helen, I *tried* to tell you back at the apartment, but you wouldn't *listen* to me! You *don't understand!*

But *you* said you didn't have enough money to *buy* one! How did you *manage* it?
I didn't! They managed it! They brought it out just after the funeral. It was the *best* they could *do.* It was *their* way of saying "*thanks*"!

The two women stopped before a mound of bare brown earth, and there was a quiet bittersweet pride in Martha's voice. .

Helen blinked because tears welled up in her eyes. They blurred her vision, but she could still see it. . . the cracked wood sign with the faded half-obscurred letters. She could see Walt's tombstone, and she suddenly knew how *wrong* she'd been. . .

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

This happened more than twenty years ago, when there were bread-lines and unemployment and gaunt-faced men wearing faded overseas caps and tattered overcoats from the American Expeditionary Forces of the First World War stood on windy street corners selling apples. It happened during the Great Depression, the bleak years of the nineteen thirties when every man was haunted by ruined ambitions and shattered dreams.

It was a cheerless December day and not even the festive holly and ribbons bedecking the shop windows could evoke a feeling of well being in anyone. The people walked, hunched over and shivering from the cold; and city traffic sloshed through the messy snow that littered the gutters and made the sidewalks like concrete quagmires.

Not far from the main shopping street stood a row of tenement houses. Before one of them a small knot of people clustered. They surrounded an elderly couple who looked about with dull, bewildered eyes. Near them was a paunchy, red-cheeked man wearing a derby hat and an outer coat with an expensive fur collar. He smoked a long cigar, and a diamond ring glittered on the finger of his right hand. The spectators glared at him hostilely, but he paid no heed to them. He showed no sign of fear when some of the onlookers loudly threatened him with bodily harm, for flanking him, were two burly policemen.

Twenty years ago such scenes were common, for the elderly couple was being evicted from their apartment because they had not paid the rent. The well-dressed man was the landlord and the law was on his side, because legally he was justified in evicting these people and placing their meager belongings into the street, for all to witness their shame.

Three powerful moving men carried the last of the old couple's belongings out. The eviction was completed. The landlord was about to go, leaving them to shift for themselves in their misery. As he was moving towards the sleek, black car parked alongside the curb, a tall, impressive man wearing a finely cut overcoat and an obviously costly suit stopped him.

"How much rent do these people owe you," the stranger asked.

"Six months rent. One hundred and eighty dollars," the landlord replied, "Why? What's it to you?"

"I'll pay it," the stranger said. He reached into his wallet and brought out a hundred dollar bill and four twenties which he handed to the astonished landlord.

"Now," the stranger said, "I'm going to pay the rest of their rent for a whole year." A murmur went through the crowd, as the man paid out the rest of the money.

"Give them a receipt for one year's rent," the stranger ordered.

The landlord did, and the movers brought their furniture back into the cramped tenement they called home, while the stranger, with a smile, disappeared into the crowd and turned the corner, his shoulders squared, his hat at a jaunty angle. The landlord looked after him wondering who the Good Samaritan was and the old people said a prayer for him that night.

Undoubtedly, the next day, when he made his bank deposit, the landlord wished even more fervently that he had learned the identity of the stranger. The bills with which he had paid the rent were all counterfeit—but the receipt the landlord had given his tenants was iron clad. Their rent was paid for a year.